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# Local Orientation and Identification Study

HALDIMAND — NORFOLK STUDY — DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

## REPORT ON GROUP INTERVIEWS






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LOCAL ORIENTATION AND IDENTIFICATION STUDY

FIRST REPORT ON GROUP INTERVIEWS







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## Earl Berger Limited Planning and Research

43 Colborne Street, Toronto 1, Ontario, Canada • Telephone (416) 366 2667

Re: LOCAL ORIENTATION AND IDENTIFICATION STUDY  
Haldimand-Norfolk Study, Department of Municipal Affairs

Dear Participant,

As you know, in January and February of this year we held ten group interviews in the Haldimand-Norfolk area to discuss its future with you and other residents. David Jackson, Bryan Smith and I want to thank you for taking the time and trouble to attend. The groups were so successful in generating a frank discussion that we are running the entire survey on a group basis: about 180 groups in all. This is, we believe, the first time in Ontario a survey has been carried out in this way on such a large scale. Your cooperation was most valuable.

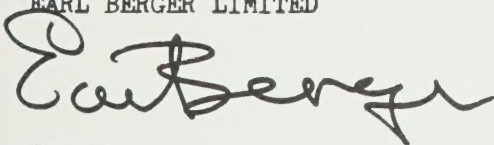
The following is a brief summary of what was said at the groups. We hope you find the information useful, that you will discuss it with your friends, and that you will continue your involvement in the Haldimand-Norfolk Study and the future development of your community.

If you have any comments, objections, or amplifications to make on this report, please let me know. Write to me at the above address.

As for what happens next, the general survey is underway and will take until May to complete. We will then collate and analyse the data during June and July. Later in the year a series of public meetings will be held to carry on the discussion.

Again, thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely  
EARL BERGER LIMITED



Earl Berger

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Covering Letter  |             |
| The Group Process                                      | 1           |
| Summary of Group Discussion                            | 2           |
| Where We Live  | 5           |
| Peak Experiences                                       | 5           |
| Regional Government, Development,<br>Change, Questions | 7           |
| Agreement on the Problems of Change                    | 12          |
| Study Organization                                     | 14          |





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## LOCAL ORIENTATION AND IDENTIFICATION STUDY

### Phase Two: Group Interviews (Pilot)

#### THE GROUP PROCESS

The purposes of the groups were to help us gain a broad cross-section of opinions about matters of concern to residents of the two counties, and to test the draft questionnaire we had prepared for the general survey which is now underway.

Five groups were held in each county, involving about 100 persons\*. We made every effort in the time available to invite as representative a cross-section of community leaders as possible, rural and urban. Every municipal councillor in the two counties was invited. Participants in each group were from the general area in which the group was held. The meetings in Jarvis and Port Dover included persons from both counties.

Many people came to the meeting expressing annoyance and frustration that here we were with yet another study. "We've been studied to death," one person said, and another, "Why has there been survey on top of survey in the past four years? Who's paying for it? We could use the money to iron out some of the existing problems." But at the end of the groups, most people said how much they had enjoyed the meetings. They said they felt they had participated in the democratic process; they had learned from others and had had a chance to talk with

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\*Norfolk:- Simcoe, Simcoe High School Students, Langton, Courtland, Port Dover

Haldimand:- Hagersville, Hagersville High School Students, Cayuga, Jarvis  
Dunnville





members of the community they wouldn't ordinarily meet; "This meeting is very enlightening"; "I'd like to come to more meetings"; "These meetings are good - you get a wider view of the situation", were typical comments. Most people said they would like to come to other meetings.

#### SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As you know, we were not looking for agreement or decisions at the meetings; we were looking for open and honest expressions of opinion. The following is a brief summary of major themes\*.

All participants expressed concern for the future. In almost every group there was a breach between those who welcomed the kinds of changes they believed industrialization and urbanization would bring to their community; and those who wished to retain much of their existing way of life. Many persons described themselves as torn between wanting the change and wanting to retain their existing way of life. This personal conflict was summed up by the farmer who said he wanted his children and grandchildren to live on the land as his family had done for many generations, working the land, making it productive, experiencing the pleasures of rural life; but this was not possible because he had sold his land for industrialization.

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\*We want to make it clear that the purpose of this report is to summarize people's views. We did not attempt to check these views for factual accuracy. If people think something to be true, that is at least as important as if it is actually true.





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3.

Attitudes towards Queen's Park were generally distrustful. Many people expressed concern about the involvement of 'foreign' civil servants and planners, and their influence in local affairs. This feeling was expressed most strongly in the Haldimand groups. A typical comment was, "My family have lived here over 190 years...those people built this country. They didn't just come over from England and tell us how to run the country." In a more general way there was considerable concern expressed about 'outsiders', i.e. people like ourselves from outside the area coming in and manipulating local residents.

Despite two years of study activity, newspaper publicity, public meetings and so on, many people said they knew little about the proposed changes in the two counties. They felt they had not had an opportunity to participate, or to make their opinions heard. The students seemed especially uninformed. A number of people said the public at large had insufficient information to make valid decisions on regional government: "The average citizen is presently unable to vote intelligently". (Port Dover): "We're going to have to be educated", (Dunnville).

Some people felt that Queen's Park had already made all the decisions, or would make them to suit the Government's needs, and the people wouldn't be given enough information to work with. Few people believed that public meetings carried much weight with the Government. Toward the end of the Delhi group, one person said, "A lot of us should have gone to those (public) meetings we were invited to, and the people in the street should know more about what's going on. Possibly they never realized before that they could have a say in it." Our group meetings were taken as an indication that the Government





really did care about what people thought, and that the decisions weren't cut and dried.

With regard to the thorny question of regional government, a number of common themes emerged. In almost every group at the beginning, most people expressed outright or indirect opposition to regional government. Many of them also said they did not have enough information to make a reasoned judgement. People were free with their criticisms of regional government, mentioning high taxes, red tape, bureaucracy, loss of local identity, loss of autonomy, dominance by the large urban areas. But, as the discussion progressed in each group to specific problems with which people were familiar in their own communities, there was a general acceptance of the need for various forms of cooperation and collaboration, both between the two counties and by the municipalities within each county. The concept of regionalism seemed to be acceptable in some form as a necessity to meet the problems of change and growth in the future. But it was widely agreed that regionalism should grow slowly, and not be imposed. Many people suggested that the counties reorganize themselves internally first, and cooperate with each other as and when necessary; and that regionalism develop from this rather than from a pre-determined idea of what regional government should be.

One of the most striking themes in all groups was the love of land and community expressed by everyone either directly or indirectly. In each group people talked of 'paradise', 'best place in the world', 'the best of the urban and farm life', 'as beautiful as anything you'll find anywhere', 'a man has everything he needs here'. Many people talked of the pressing need to preserve the shoreline, to keep the forests and dunes, to protect the rivers, to keep out pollution.





### Where We Live

Each person was asked to describe his or her country or area, and what they liked about it. The following summarizes their comments on what they like best about where they live.

1. Outdoor activities - sports, fishing, boating, camping;
2. Coming home from someplace else, especially a city;
3. Natural environment - parks, scenery, historical sites;
4. "Small town atmosphere" - friendliness, knowing everybody, cleanliness, prettiness, slow-paced life; in most cases this was contrasted with urban life - "City to me is a dirty word" - and the hustle-bustle, money-orientation, noise, traffic, pressure in cities;
5. Owning your own land, whether it be a farm or even a big back-yard; lots of space;
6. Lack of major pollution problems and the abundance of clean air and water;
7. Good location for all services and facilities; being able to have the best of both urban and rural worlds.

### Peak Experiences

Towards the end of most groups, participants were asked to describe a peak experience in their lives; something they would like their children to have as well.

"I was walking along the creek and watching it run...it was absolutely quiet, except for the birds singing and the wind rustling through the leaves...a blue sky with the sun just coming through a cloud...that's beautiful, there's nothing like it."

(Langton)

"We drove out to the beach with the family...the water was clear...we were isolated, yet close to civilization...that thing we had that day, that remoteness, yet closeness - in 15 minutes we were away from everything, yet we were in no danger if a storm came up...I think this could be done in the same way all along the lakeshore..."

(Langton)



"I would like to maintain a small-town atmosphere in an economically large community...if I have a friend from out of town in, I think it's pleasant to take him to a golf course downtown...and say hello to people, and feel a friendly community spirit..."

(Simcoe)

"...unspoiled surroundings - I hate to live in a dumpy area with a jumble of factories and a lot of pollution...this is degrading. Progress can be combined with the principle of quality...I would like to see the community atmosphere maintained and incorporated into the overall picture."

(Simcoe)

"...watch your own crops shooting up, get a little dirt on your hands ...a lot of farmers really like that - they can look at it and say, 'I grew this'..."

(Hagersville Students)

"There's lots of room, and wildlife, and you can go for a walk in the bush...you don't have to worry about walking in somebody's back-yard..."

(Hagersville Students)

"I want my children always to be aware of the thrill of seeing new life, such as when a cow calves...I like the smell of the earth in spring ...I like a good challenge such as we had this year with meetings of Council, and trying to finagle support for the arena project and being successful in the end...there was real community spirit in this."

(Cayuga)

"In Centennial year, I think it did everyone's heart good to see how everyone from the age of zero to 100 years worked together and attended different parades...I don't like to see all the old buildings torn down and put up new...Let's retain some of our own heritage."

(Cayuga)

"I feel as though this community is a family...I have a warm feeling of pride when this community accomplishes something, or when someone in it prospers...If my house burns down tonight, I'll have 20 people saying 'would you spend the night at my place?'...I never walk down the road without being offered a ride...my child never walks home in the rain ...When I was younger, every teacher knew me, knew my family, took an interest in me above and beyond the simple educational mill...I think a lot of this has been lost lately with the upsurge in population ...Much of the joy we have here comes from the things we can accomplish because of the financial life we are able to lead here: own our own homes, have our own back-yards, participate in community projects. In the city, a man becomes a number, he's condemned to an apartment - I think he must lead a very lonely life in comparison with what we have here...we have enough prosperity so that we can enjoy our assets...it's





not an economic rat race...we have a higher standard of living on an equal amount of dollars, we have access to what the city offers when we want it, yet we can retreat back to our family, where we have privacy, solitude, the smell of the earth. You can't define an afternoon walk with your child between you and your wife, listening to the birds...When I'm unhappiest, away from this community and seeing how other people live, I can't wait to get home."

(Cayuga)

#### Regional Government, Development, Change

The question of regional government took up most of each discussion, along with matters relating to urbanization, industrialization, taxes, services. Almost everyone agreed that changing circumstances required changes in government structure. The key questions were: how much change? what kind of change? slowly or quickly?

Several ideas were voiced at all meetings, and are summarized below.

1. The most constant theme at all groups, the most frequently mentioned, was: if there is regional government, government will get too far from the people. "We'll lose personal contact with our representatives." Many people spoke of knowing their councillors and municipal clerk personally, of being able to call them up and get something done: "If you can't get your road cleared, you know who to call." People said they were well represented, that local government was responsive to their needs. They contrasted this situation with city government where there are tens of thousands of voters for each representative. Many of them were concerned about bureaucracy standing between the individual and his government. They spoke in critical terms of expanding government in the Niagara Region; of





government getting too big and impersonal. Some of them spoke of the county school boards as an example. One teacher said that previously she had known personally all her trustees and the other teachers in her municipality. Now, with a county board, she didn't know her trustees or most of the other teachers, or the administrators. She felt herself to be a small cog in a large system. Other people spoke critically of the expanding educational system. Many of them agreed that county reorganization had brought some improvement in school facilities - at a cost - and that reorganization was probably necessary. But they were opposed to any further reorganization and consolidation for schools, or to doing the same in other fields except where it was proven necessary, and then gradually.

2. Most people were equally concerned about rising taxes. Many pointed to the Niagara Region as an instance where consolidation of services had brought substantially higher municipal budgets and taxes. People agreed that consolidation had improved the services of the smaller, poorer municipalities in the Niagara Region. But, many people also pointed out that the increase in taxes was substantially higher than was warranted by a simple improvement of services to poor municipalities. Expanding bureaucracies, red tape, inflexibility, empire building, all were cited as examples of the reason for higher taxes in the Niagara Region. Most people in the groups expressed general satisfaction with their existing municipal government and the level of services it provided.



3. A number of people felt that regional government would give the grassroots a stronger voice with the Provincial and Federal governments, in land use planning and in dealing with industry. Also, regional government would equalize taxation and services, bringing up the standards of poorer communities. This was generally accepted.
4. A number of people expressed doubts about the wisdom of the whole concept of regional government because of experiences elsewhere. The Niagara Region, and sometimes the Ottawa-Carleton Region, were cited as examples where the large urban areas dominated the smaller rural communities. There were many problems involved in making regional government work: "We don't need that." Some people said the Niagara Region was in danger of breaking up, and this was described as an object lesson for Haldimand-Norfolk.
5. People in a number of groups said they simply did not have enough information about regional government and what it entailed to make a considered judgement. It was not uncommon for someone to complain about the Government jamming regional government down the people's throats and, later on, to complain that the Government hadn't come out with specific boundaries or a plan, something concrete people could deal with: "then we can discuss it."





6. As the discussions wore on in most groups, many people came to the tentative conclusion that Haldimand and Norfolk faced at least some mutual problems which they would have to solve jointly, and that some form of 'regionalism' was necessary. But most people objected strongly to moving directly into a regional government. "We'll go steady with Norfolk (or Haldimand) but we won't get married," was a typical comment. Many people preferred to establish ad hoc committees or joint committees, when necessary, to handle specific problems affecting the two counties, and move slowly toward regionalization if and as the need arose: such problems as equalized tax assessment could be handled in the meantime by the Province. Simcoe was the only group where there appeared to be a general consensus that union was desirable enough to outweigh the problems which might arise.
7. In all groups there was an almost unanimous concern for maintaining and protecting local identities. Local people wanted to have a strong say in their local affairs. They wanted to be able to continue to lead their own life styles as they choose, without being swallowed up. The question of local identities was not linked to municipal boundaries but rather to a sense of community.
8. The question of amalgamating local municipalities was discussed at most meetings. In Haldimand, opinions on this matter were well advanced. Haldimand groups talked of the need to restructure their own county first and then move, if and when necessary, into closer cooperation





with Norfolk. When the maps were brought out, the Haldimand people in all groups were generally agreed upon the restructuring of Haldimand: they all drew lines incorporating municipalities together centred on Dunnville, Jarvis, Hagersville, Cayuga and Caledonia. The question in their minds seemed to be whether there should be four or five such consolidated municipalities. In Norfolk the groups were much less certain of the shape of any restructuring, and many people would not use the maps.

#### Questions

Much of the discussion described above was marked by considerable uncertainty over what was actually involved in the projected industrialization and urbanization of the area. People frequently said that they simply did not know what the implications were of regional government. This may have been one of the reasons some of them wanted the Provincial Government to give them a detailed plan which would at least tell them something.

Typical questions were:

1. What is the structure of regional government? will there be one tier, two or three? which tier will have what responsibilities?
2. How much will administrative costs rise? will taxes increase? will services be better, cheaper, more efficient?
3. Will regional government really speak for the people through elected representatives? will there be a great increase in bureaucracy?



4. Do we have to have regional government in order to have its advantages? Can a reasonable tax split between bedroom and industrial areas be achieved without regional government? Can planning be done on a cooperative, informal basis?

Agreement on the Problems of Change

In every group, a change of attitude occurred about halfway through the meeting. People switched from complaining about regional government and Queen's Park to a more positive, constructive attitude: dealing with the problems facing the area and how to cope with them.

For example, in Hagersville one person said at the beginning of the meeting, "We basically have no need of regional government." This sentiment was generally echoed. Towards the middle of the meeting the discussion moved to dealing with the specific problems which Hagersville faced, and the need for collaboration and planning. And the meeting ended with the statement, "If they give me clean air and clean water, I'll give them some of my rights to make choices."

In Dunnville, someone said, "I came here against this whole thing, thinking it would cost a lot of money and get away from the personal in government... I see we need some type of regionalization. But let's creep before we jump." And someone else said, "I don't mind paying money if we get something out of it."





All groups were agreed that some changes were necessary; that growth was inevitable. Planning was generally considered to be necessary for future well-being. The main questions in people's minds on this point were the degree of growth to be expected and, therefore, the degree of planning necessary, and which communities were to do what. Lack of planning was widely held to be responsible for pollution, for ugly subdivisions, for the destruction of the environment and wildlife; industries were allowed to buy up farm land, the farmers moved out, the industries then held off development, residential lots in the area depreciated and became eyesores, and the community suffered economic loss from the decrease in the farm population.

It was generally agreed that small, poor municipalities should be amalgamated into larger townships for more efficient planning and services: some communities were already cooperating in this respect.

Towns should be allowed to grow to a limited extent, with planning for green-belt buffer areas. The good land should be kept for farming, the rest for parks and residential areas. "We don't want wall-to-wall industry," someone in Cayuga said. In most groups, people said, "We just can't afford to let things happen here that have happened in other places."

Along with this acceptance of the need for change, however, was the parallel sentiment expressed in most groups that people were generally satisfied with their existing form of government, and could see no immediate necessity for radical changes.



And always, as we mentioned earlier, there was love of the land and the conflict between the desire to protect and preserve the quality of life people enjoy now; and the desire to bring in growth and attendant prosperity which, as a by-product, could irrevocably alter that quality of life.

### STUDY ORGANIZATION

These groups were part of the first phase of the on-going Local Orientation and Identification Study commissioned by the Haldimand-Norfolk Study, Department of Municipal Affairs, and carried out by Earl Berger Limited, David Jackson and Associates Limited, and Donovan Pinker Consultants Limited, under the direction of Dr. Earl Berger. The group facilitators were Dr. David Jackson, Dr. Earl Berger and Bryan Smith. The meetings were organized by Eleanor Munro for Haldimand County and Catherine Smale for Norfolk County. The tape recordings of the meetings were coded and collated by Indra Ancans, and this report was written by Dr. Berger.











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